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"I Am the Way, the Truth and the Life."—Jesus

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Women and the Apostle Paul

It is the pride of the Brethren church that among its members there is perfect equality. Touching the rights and privileges of each individual member there is neither male nor female, neither Jew nor Greek, but all are one in Christ. Years ago, at one of the conferences of the Brethren church held in Pennsylvania, the following resolution was unanimously passed: "Resolved that we encourage worthy young men and women in the Brethren church to enter the Christian ministry." So far as we have knowledge this was the first resolution of the kind passed by any church, in its official capacity. From the very beginning women in the Brethren church have had equal rights and privileges with men. This we believe to be apostolic, and we point to the fact as an evidence of progress and a return to primitive Christianity. True, the Apostle Paul is often quoted in opposition to this view; Paul, it is argued, gave instruction to the effect that women should keep silent in the church. But that Paul was not laying down certain fixed rules or regulations capable of universal application; that he was dealing with a principle of local, and not eternal application, is clear both from the context and from Paul's attitude towards women's position and mission under the dispensation of grace. The apostle speaks most tenderly and affectionately of the women who helped him in the Gospel, who encouraged him and did him kindly service in his work. It is a mistake to suppose that Paul was not in favor or in harmony with the rights and privileges which Christianity, the new religion, accorded to women. When he gave instruction to the church at Corinth touching the rights and privileges of women he had a reason for writing as he did; but clearly Paul never meant this principle to be applied in all cases and in circumstances different from those which obtained in the Corinthian church. Paul clearly and cheerfully recognized the helpfulness of women in the service of the Gospel and he very touchingly refers to those who rendered him practical service in the ministry of the Gospel of the Son of God.

It is not too much to say that women have no better

friend in any one than in the Apostle Paul. Motherhood and sisterhood should forever honor the Apostle Paul for his noble tribute to mother, home and wife. It would be difficult to find a passage in any man's writing of which women everywhere in Christian lands have more reasons to be proud than some of the sayings of the Apostle Paul. In his single letter Paul mentions ten distinguished women, all of whom were his friends, and who had rendered him practical service. In the fifth chapter of his first letter to Timothy he writes, "Entreat the elder women as mothers, the younger as sisters, with all purity." This is a beautiful saying and should find a welcome in the hearts of all mothers. Again, in writing to the Philippians he says, "I entreat thee, true yoke-fellow, help those women who labored with me in the Gospel." Read also what Paul says of Priscilla and her husband who had a "church in their house" and who, Paul declares were his "helpers in Christ Jesus." That certain Mary in Rome who "bestowed much labor" on Paul; Tryphena and Tryphosa, "who labored in the Lord." Julia, Paul's "kinswoman;" Persis "who labored much in the Lord;" besides these were the mother of Rufus, and Julia, the sister of Nereus, with a host of others, noble women who had not only been the friends of Paul, but who were co-laborers with him in the Gospel. "Surely that man is not to be spoken of in a flippant way as a soured old bachelor or an embittered widower, who had such an array of friends among women as Paul manifestly enjoyed." The Rev. Doctor Deems, until his death pastor of the Church of the Strangers, New York City, speaking of what the religion of Christ has done for women says:

Christianity did not set women free from her obligations as mother and wife, but it did set her leisure and her powers free from the imprisonment of the harem, from the humdrum of the secluded Hebrew home, and from the demands of modern frivolous fashionable life, free to serve God in the ministry of the Gospel in whose service "there is neither male nor female, neither bond nor free," in which women can work as well as men, and the slave as well as the Master. The first apostles acknowledge that and acted upon it, and the rapid growth of Christianity at the beginning, in its human instrumentalities, is largely due to this holy sagacity.